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Racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and related forms of intolerance, follow-up and implementation of the Durban Declaration and Programme of Action

Joint written statement* submitted by International-Lawyers.Org, the Arab Organization for Human Rights, the General Arab Women Federation, Indian Movement "Tupaj Amaru", the International Organization for the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination, Organisation Mondiale des associations pour l'éducation prénatale, the Union of Arab Jurists, non-governmental organizations in special consultative status, the International Educational Development, Inc., World Peace Council, non-governmental organizations on the roster

The Secretary-General has received the following written statement which is circulated in accordance with Economic and Social Council resolution 1996/31.

[17 February 2016]

* This written statement is issued, unedited, in the language(s) received from the submitting non-governmental organization(s).

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Racism and Discrimination faced by newly arrived Migrants in the EU

Media channels in Europe, since the beginning of January 2016 have been reporting widespread cases of crimes committed by migrants. These reports and the portrayal of newly arrived migrants to the European Union, have been very harmful for in shaping the opinions of the citizens of the EU. Thus it is not unexpected that there has been a rise in popularity of far right groups and populist parties who have capitalized on people's anger and emotions.

This has created not only an unwelcoming environment for the migrants in Europe but also one that has resulted in violent clashes and attacks. On a larger scale these problems have led to a political climate that risks not only the safety of the migrants in their new homes but also the existence of democracy and the unity of states in Europe. The fight against xenophobia and racism is not one that is fought on the battle field or in the conference room but one that is best fought using education and social programs.
Many political fringe parties, with highly controversial and radical ideas have used the fears and ignorance of the people to their advantage. Even more so they have exaggerated it in order to multiply the fear, by claiming that peoples most precious members, their women and children are at risk as a result of migration. The truth is however that this is absolutely false, and has been manipulated with the pure intent of blackmailing people into voting such parties. The effect that this has had on the migrants is an increase in attacks on their shelters by thugs and arsonists, fortunately no one has been killed, but the attacks are becoming more frequent and brazen.

Increasing Attacks on Migrant Centres

Migrant centres are increasingly being attacked around Europe, in what seems to be "revenge" attacks for much publicized crimes committed by people who are either migrants or of migrant descent. During the year 2015, Sweden saw four more times the number of attacks on asylum shelters than in the period between 2011 and 2014 combined. Sweden has more asylum seekers and migrants per capita than any other country in Europe. Many of the suspects apprehended following such attacks are members of far right groups who act as a result of rumours or news of attacks on ethnic Swedes by migrants.[1]
The belief amongst many of these youth is that, the authorities are not doing enough and thus they feel the need to act. Not only do these deplorable and horrific actions constitute racist violence but also a collective blame and punishment based often on rumours of reported crimes. Many migrants who grew up in Sweden have reported that the country has become less safe than it used to be, with some even considering the option of leaving.[2]

One should mention that Sweden is not the only country in Europe where similarly horrific actions have taken place. In Germany there have been over 1000 attacks on migrant accommodations in 2015. This is five times more than in 2014. The most recent of these criminal attacks to make the headlines was when a hand grenade had been thrown at a migrant hostel in Germany on the 29th of January 2016. Fortunately, the grenade did not detonate in the hostel which at the time was housing 170 migrants.[3]
The sheer volume in the number of such attacks just goes to show that these are common occurrences and need to be taken very seriously both by the police as well as the governments of these respective states. The actions that can be taken are none the less very sensitive since one cannot limit the level of free speech in a country. That said a lot of these attacks are propagated by political entities that are using people's fears to their electoral

[1] Wikstrom, Cajsa. "Sweden Detains Poles over Plot to Attack Asylum Centre." *Al-Jazeera*. Al-Jazeera, 10 Feb. 2016. Web. 16 Feb. 2016. <http://www.aljazeera.com/news/2016/02/sweden-detains-poles-plot-attack-asylum-centre-160210092606548.html>.

[2] Wikstrom, Cajsa. "Sweden Detains Poles over Plot to Attack Asylum Centre." *Al-Jazeera*. Al-Jazeera, 10 Feb. 2016.

[3] "Migrant Crisis: Grenade Thrown at Asylum Hostel in Germany." *BBC*. British Broadcasting Corporation, 29 Jan. 2016. Web. 17 Feb. 2016. <http://www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-35437873>.

advantage. Hence it is recommended that strict laws against hate speech be introduced in order to prevent populists from inciting people to carry out acts of violence against migrants.
There for we call for the governments and civil societies of the EU countries to do more in order to secure the well-being of the migrants, by granting that their dignity and human rights are protected by the organs of the local law. Amongst these actions steps should also be undertaken in order to monitor the far right groups that have had a history of violence.

Long Run Initiatives

GICJ asks the governments of the European community to remember the suffering faced by millions during and following the end of the second world war. The pillars of today's European Union were built upon upholding the peace and preventing the possibility of war breaking out in the near future. Europe at the end of WWII also had millions of refugees who escaped the bombed out cities and either returned home or looked for a new home following the re-drawing of the border of Poland and Germany.

The millions of refugees also then found it difficult as did their new neighbours. But in the end with time and tolerance, these new arrivals integrated themselves well into society and benefitted their new communities greatly. This is also what we hope to see with today's migrants in Europe.

That said in order for there to be a peaceful integration there must be tolerance, law and education. These are things that should be provided at a local and national level. If the spiral of hate and violence is allowed to go on uncontrolled, we could be seeing very dark times ahead, especially given the rise of far right sentiment in Europe and the political parties that accompany them. Like all new and drastic change they take time to acclimatize to, that is if one facilitates the changes to occur smoothly.

Historically speaking the majority of cases regarding migration have led to positive changes. As a result of a growth in population brought about by the arrival of people willing to start a new life, countries have grown both socially and economically. One should note that in 2011 a Forbes magazine article found that 40% of the Fortune 500 companies in the world were founded by migrants or their children, Intel, Google and eBay are just some of the most famous examples.[4]

Hence the conclusion one can draw from this is that it is not only our duty to humanity to accommodate and protect those in need but also in our long term interest. We are well aware that there are concerns regarding the job availability in certain countries, however we are also aware that many of these countries have for many years now had negative birth rates. Should this trend continue, economies in the next 30 to 40 years will begin to strain due to the occurrence of more people who are pensioners than in the work force itself. The only way to reverse this is to increase the population of young and able bodied people who will work towards the improvement of the respective economies.

Courses of Action
We call upon the governments in Europe in particular to devise plans of action that will facilitate the safe accommodation of migrants within the borders of these respective states. Furthermore, we ask that steps be taken to educate people about the evil nature that constitutes racism and discrimination, strongly emphasizing that this is a fate that can befall all of us at one point or more in our lives. People should also be made aware of the plight that many of the migrants escaped from in order to find safety and a better life.

Acts of racism should be criminalized as they violate the fundamental human dignity of the victims. We are well aware that it is impossible to fully eradicate racism, however given the recent rise in racist motivated attacks, we do hope that at least the instances of racist attacks can be reduced over time. For this to occur the respective governments must enact the above mentioned steps and precautions.

[4] Anderson, Stuart. "40 Percent of Fortune 500 Companies Founded by Immigrants or Their Children." *Forbes*. Forbes Magazine, 11 Jan. 2011. Web. 17 Feb. 2016. <http://www.forbes.com/sites/stuartanderson/2011/06/19/40-percent-of-fortune-500-companies-founded-by-immigrants-or-their-children/#742a5ff17a22>.

We must always remember that "ignorance breeds fear. Fear breeds hate. Hate breeds violence." Hence we should work to transform this cycle into: "Education breeds confidence. Confidence breeds hope and hope breeds peace."[5]

Recommendations:

- Governments of the EU should draft laws that criminalize racism and especially racist violence as serious offences.
- Call on EU governments and the respective law enforcement agencies to protect centres which house migrants, as well as keeping under close observation far-right groups that have a history of violent racist acts.
- We also call on the respective EU governments to adhere to and respect the laws pertaining to the non-refoulement of migrants that are at risk of detention, torture or death in their countries of origin.
- Initiate social educational efforts such as multi-cultural events that enable people to learn about each other's cultures and dispel misconceived fears and stereotypes.

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The Brussells Tribunal, Arab Lawyers Association- UK, Geneva International Centre for Justice (GICJ), Association of Humanitarian Lawyers (AHL), The International League of Iraqi Academics (ILIA), The Iraqi Commission on Human Rights (ICHR), Women Will Association (WWA), Organization for Widows and Orphans (OWO), Ikraam Center for Human Rights, Belgian Peace Movement, Ligue camerounaise des droits de l'homme, International Coalition against War Criminals (ICAWC), Medical Aid for the Third World, Association of Iraqi Diplomats (AID), General Federation of Iraqi Women (GFIW), Association of Iraqi Intellectuals and Academics, The International Network of Arab Human Rights NGOs, The Perdana Global Peace Foundation, Kuala Lumpur Foundation to Criminalise War, Spanish Campaign against the Occupation and for Iraq Sovereignty- CEOSI, Arab Cause Solidarity Committee, Iraq Solidarity Association in Stockholm, Human Rights Defenders in Iraq (AHRDI), Centre for Human Rights and Democracy, The Iraqi Centre for Human Rights, Association, Organisation for Justice & Democracy in Iraq (OJDI), NGO(s) without consultative status, also share the views expressed in this statement.

[5] Cortina, Joe. "Ignorance Breeds Fear. Fear Breeds Hate. Hate Breeds Violence. Education Breeds Confidence. Confidence Breeds Hope. Hope Breeds Peace." Weblog post. *MYNAMEISJOECORTINA*. Word Press, 01 Sept. 2012. Web. 17 Feb. 2016. <https://mynameisjoecortina.wordpress.com/2012/09/01/ignorance-breeds-fear-fear-breeds-hate-hate-breeds-violence-education-breeds-confidence-confidence-breeds-hope-hope-breeds-peace/>.